

BOOK ONE - ATHENA INSPIRES THE PRINCE

SCENE: Calypso's island (briefly), Olympus (briefly), Ithaca, (mainly)

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS:

Gods: Poseidon, Hermes, Athena/Mentes, Zeus

Mortals: Telemachus, Mentes (Athena): King of the Taphians, friend of Odysseus, Penelope, Eurycleia (nurse) Phemias (the singer), the "suitors," especially Antinous and Eurymachus.

The Book begins with the invocation to the Muse followed by Athena's plea to Zeus to allow her favorite mortal Odysseus to travel home from Ogygia, where he has been held captive for seven years by the nymph Calypso. Zeus agrees but not without insisting the trip be arduous. He does not want to enrage the absent Poseidon, who is angry at Odysseus for having blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus. Athena goes to Ithaca to spur Telemachus, Odysseus' son, into action and start him toward manhood. There we met the suitors of Odysseus wife, Penelope, who are abusing the rules of hospitality. We also learn that Penelope has done whatever she could to keep them from taking her hand in marriage. Almost everyone on Ithaca believes Odysseus to be dead.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

Invocation

Story of Orestes (including Zeus' attitude toward of Aegisthus).

The Gods' discussion of Odysseus. Who is on his side? Who is not? Why?

What Zeus "rules."

Problems of Odysseus: Where is he? Why? How long has he been away?

Athena's disguise.

Youth of Telemachus.

The violation of hospitality

Penelope's situation.

Penelope's actions.

EPITHETS: Who is...

"The bewitching nymph"

"Son of Cronos"

"Who marshals the thunderheads"

"The clear eyed goddess"

"Cool headed"

QUESTIONS:

What do you see as the attitude of the Gods' towards men?

What do you see as the attitude of the Greeks towards hospitality?

How would you characterize Telemachus at this point? What are his strengths?

What are his weaknesses?

How does Athena plan to affect Telemachus?

What tragic homecoming story do we hear of? How does it relate to the situation in Ithaca?

Who is Phemius?

How does Telemachus show strength with Penelope?

How does this relate to the visit of Athena?

QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of (1)
twists and turns
driven time and again off course, once he
had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy.

But one man alone... (15)
his heart set on his wife and his return –
Calypso
the bewitching nymph, the lustrous
goddess, held him back.

Recalling Aegisthus, Zeus harangued the (36)
immortal powers:
"Ah how shameless – the way these mortals
blame the gods.

From us alone, they say, come all their
miseries..."

"Why, Zeus, why so dead set against
Odysseus? (76)

"My child, what nonsense you let slip
through your teeth. Now,
how on earth could I forget Odysseus?
Great Odysseus
who excels all men in wisdom, excels in
offerings, too..."

First by far to see her was Prince (132)
Telemachus,
sitting among the suitors, heart obsessed
with grief.

And young Telemachus cautiously replied, (249)
"...Mother has always told me I'm his son,
it's true,
But I am not so certain."

"If only that Odysseus sported with these (307)
suitors,
a blood wedding, a quick death, would take
the lot."

"So Mother, (409)
go back to your quarters, tend to your own
tasks,
the distaff and the loom, and keep the
women
working hard as well. As for the bow now,
men will see to that, but i most of all,
I hold the reign of power in this house"
Astonished,
she took to her own room. She took to heart
the clear good sense of what her son had
said.
Climbing up to the lofty chamber with her
women
she fell to weeping for Odysseus, her
beloved husband
till watchful Athena sealed her eyes with
welcome sleep.
(see [Book 21](#), 389-399)

Now the suitors turned to dance and song, (480)
In the lovely beat and sway, waiting for
dusk to come upon them there...
and the dark night came upon them lost in
pleasure.

BOOK TWO - TELEMACHUS SETS SAIL

SCENE: Ithaca

CHARACTERS: Eurycleia, Mentos/Mentor/Athena, Telemachus, Antinous, Halitherses,
Eurymachus.

In Book 2, Athena, disguised as Mentor, arranges for Telemachus to take a trip to find
out from Nestor, one of the Greek Captains in the Trojan War, ostensibly to find out if
Odysseus is still alive. In the Book Telemachus surprises both Penelope and the suitors

by his newly decisive behavior. He does not, however, tell his mother of his plans, knowing she would try to stop him.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

Athena, goddess of the household who looks over the family.

The economic importance of the household.

The bird omen and the reactions to it.

Assembly and debate.

The "new" Telemachus.

The abuse of and departure of Telemachus.

EPITHETS: Who is...

"self possessed?"

"Daughter of Zeus?"

What has "rose red fingers?"

QUESTIONS:

What is the suitor's attitude towards Penelope's reluctance to choose one of them?

Why do they think it is their right to "demand" that she choose?

What are the two different interpretations of the omen?

How does Telemachus respond to the position put forward by Antinous?

QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

"You should be ashamed yourselves, (69)
mortified in the face of neighbors living
round about!
Fear the god's wrath – before they wheel in
outrage
make these crimes of yours recoil on your
heads."

"So by day she'd weave at her great and (114)
growing web –
by night, by the light of torches placed
beside her,
she would unravel all she's done. Three
whole years
she deceived us, seduced us with this
scheme."

"Not one could equal Penelope for intrigue (134)
but in this case she intrigues beyond all
limits."

And to seal his prayer, farseeing (164)
Zeus sent down a sign.
He launched two eagles soaring
high from a mountain ridge
and down they glided, borne on the
wings draft a moment,
wing to wingtip, pinions straining
taut till just
above the assembly's throbbing
hum they whirled,
suddenly, wings thrashing, wild
onslaught of wings
and banking down at the crowd's
heads - a glaring, fatal sign –
talons slashing each other, tearing
cheeks and throats
they swooped away on the right
through homes and city.

"Telemachus, (302)
you'll lack neither courage nor

sense from this day on,
not if your father's spirit courses
through your veins. "

"But now that I'm full grown (348)
and can hear the truth from
others, absorb it, too –
now, yes, that anger seethes inside
me...
I'll stop at nothing to hurl
destruction at you heads,
whether I go to Pylos or sit right
here at home."

A wail of grief, (399)
and his fond old nurse (Eurykleia)
burst out in sobbing.

BOOK THREE - KING NESTOR REMEMBERS

SCENE: Pylos

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS: Telemachus, Athena, Nestor, Pisistratus.

This Book begins and ends with sacrifices to the vying gods (Poseidon and Athena) of the Odyssey. In it Telemachus learns from both Nestor and Pisistratus the importance of hospitality and of respect for the gods. Athena seems especially impressed by "old fashioned" ways of Nestor. Telemachus is treated with great respect and he begins to learn what it means to be his father's son. At the end of the Book Telemachus is sent inland to Sparta to meet Menelaus who might know of Odysseus' whereabouts.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

The sacrifice to Poseidon at the beginning of the book.

Athena's "prayer to Poseidon.

Respect paid to Odysseus.

Athena's role at the end of the war. Her wrath.

Nestor's hospitality.

The Orestes story again.

The sacrifice to Athena at the end of the book

EPITHETS:

Who is "the noble charioteer?"

What is "wine dark?"

QUESTIONS:

How does Athena help Telemachus prepare for Nestor?

Why is it important for Telemachus to meet Nestor in particular? What does he seem to represent?

Why is it important for Telemachus to meet Pisistratus?

What does Telemachus learn about himself? about the meaning of being a son? about the treatment of guests? about sacrifices to the gods?

QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

Pylos... where the people lined the beaches, (5)
sacrificing sleek black bulls to Poseidon,
god of the sea blue mane who shakes the earth.

"Some of the words you'll find within yourself, (29)
the rest some power will inspire you to say."

"All men need the gods, (54)
but the man is younger, just about my age
that's why I give this gold cup first to you."
With that
Pisistratus placed in her hand the cup of mellow wine
and Pallas rejoiced at the prince's sense of tact.

Poised Telemachus answered, (84)
filled with heart, the heart Athena herself had inspired
to ask about his father, gone so long
and make his name throughout the mortal world.

". . . it meant no joy to Agamemnon, not at all, (159)
he meant to detain us there and offer victims,
anything to appease Athena's dreadful wrath –
poor fool, he never dreamed Athena would not
comply.

The minds of everlasting gods don't change so (225)
quickly. "And you, my friend –
how tall and handsome I see you now – be brave, you,
too, (like Orestes)
so men to come will sing your praises down the years."

"Now, O Queen, be gracious! Give us high renown, (425)
myself, my children, my loyal wife and queen.
And I will make you a sacrifice, a yearling heifer
broad in the brow, unbroken, never yoked by men."

The women shrilled their cry . . . then hoisting up (506)
the victim's head from the trampled earth, they held her
fast
as the captain of men Pisistratus slashed her throat.
Dark blood gushed forth, life ebbed from her limbs –

BOOK FOUR - THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPARTA

SCENE: Sparta, Ithaca

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS: Telemachus, Menelaus, Helen, Pisistratus, Antinous,
Eurycleia, Penelope, Athena, Proteus, Aegisthus, Orestes, & Medon

When Pisistratus and Telemachus arrive, a wedding party is taking place but there is no hesitation on the part of the King, Menelaus, to make the strangers feel completely welcome. His wife, Helen – yes, the Helen – is equally hospitable and quickly sees that Telemachus must be Odysseus' son. The palace is sumptuous, the entertainment lavish, and the stories, especially Helen's, embellished. She plays the part she has been given – daughter of Zeus – without shame, and to the consternation but not displeasure of her still smitten husband. Menelaus tells the story of his return, the most important part of which is the evidence from Proteus that Odysseus is still alive. At the end of the book we return to Ithaca where Penelope has learned of her son's disappearance.

Athena, in disguise as Penelope's sister, gives her courage.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

More Greek hospitality and feasting.

Helen's contribution to the "meal."

Menelaus' return from Troy.

What Telemachus learns from Menelaus about Odysseus.

The stories of Troy told by Helen.

Menelaus' reaction to Helen's story.

The story of Proteus

The plot to kill Telemachus

EPITHETS: Who is . . .

"red haired?"

"son of Atreus?"

"the pearl of women?"

"The Old man of the Sea?"

QUESTIONS:

How do Menelaus and Helen compare with Nestor as hosts?

How do they contrast with the suitors the suitors as guests?

Do Menelaus and Helen know who Telemachus is at the beginning of the book?

What do you make of the relationship between Menelaus and Helen?

What is impressive about their palace?
 Who is Proteus? How does Menelaus catch him? With whose help?
 What does Menelaus tell Telemachus about Odysseus' whereabouts?
 Why does Telemachus need to go to two homes, and visit two of the Captains destroyed Troy?
 Why is information withheld so frequently (Proteus at first balks, and Penelope's sister, in a dream, is also reluctant. Why is other information (Helen's) suspect?
 QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

Helen emerged from her scented, lofty (135)
 chambers
 striking as Artemis with her golden shafts...

"Do we know, my Lord, who our visitors (153)
 claim to be, our welcome new arrivals?
 ...To the life he's like the son of great
 Odysseus,
 surely he's Telemachus. The boy that hero
 left
 a babe in arms at home when all you
 Achaeans
 fought at Troy, launching your headlong
 battles,
 just for me, shameless whore that I was."

"Wonderful!" the red haired king cried out. (185)
 "The son of my dearest friend, here in my
 own house."

So Menelaus mused (204)
 and stirred in them a deep desire to grieve.

Then Zeus' daughter Helen thought of (243)
 something else.
 Into the mixing bowl from which they
 drank their wine, she
 slipped a drug, heart's ease, dissolving
 anger,
 magic to make us all forget our pains.

". . .and no one knew him at all (280)
 I alone, I spotted him for the man he was."

"There was a tale, my lady. So well told... (298)
 Three times you sauntered round our
 hollow ambush
 feeling, stroking its flanks,
 challenging our fighters, calling each by
 name –
 yours was the voice of all our long lost
 wives!
 . . . but Odysseus clamped his great hands
 on the man's mouth
 and shut it brutally – yes he saved us all."

" Weak as the doe that beds down her (374)
 fawns
 in a mighty lions den - her newborn
 sucklings -
 then trails off to the mountain spurs and
 grassy bends
 to graze her fill, but back the lion comes to
 his own lair

and the master deals both fawns a ghastly,
bloody death
just what Odysseus will deal that mob -
ghastly death."

"Up from the shore he led the king, he (600)
ushered him in -
suspecting nothing of all his doom – he
feasted him well
then cut him down as a man cuts down an
ox at the trough!"
*(Proteus telling Menelaus of Agamemnon's
death at the hands of Aegisthus.)*

"I saw him once on an island, weeping live (626)
warm tears
in the nymph Calypso's house – she holds
him there by force."
*(Proteus telling Menelaus of Odysseus'
plight.)*

Telemachus, (667)
summoning up his newfound tact . . .

Medon, the soul of thoughtfulness, replied, (801)
"I don't know if a god inspired your son
or the boy's own impulse led him down to
Pylos,
but he went to learn his father's journey
home,
or whatever fate he's met."

Penelope. . . would her fine son escape his (896)
death
or go down at her overweening suitors'
hands?
Her mind in torment, wheeling
like some lion at bay, dreading the gangs of
hunters
closing their cunning ring around him for
the finish.

"He travels with such an escort, one that (930)
others
would pray to stand beside them. She has
power
Pallas Athena. She pities your tears..."

BOOK FIVE - ODYSSEUS - NYMPH AND SHIPWRECK

SCENE: Ogygia

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS:

Odysseus, Calypso, Athena, Zeus, Poseidon, A sea nymph. Ino/Leucothoe: A goddess of the sea who saves Odysseus.

When we first meet Odysseus he is longing for home. Hermes arrives and after admiring the glorious gardens, he informs Calypso that Zeus has commanded her to release her captive. She complains about the double standard of male gods but knows she has no choice. Odysseus can hardly believe his change of fortune, but he is careful not to offend his companions. She in turn help him equip for his sea journey. The voyage is fought with hardship thanks to Poseidon. Odysseus is careful to be appreciative of anything a god can do to help him.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

Odysseus weeping, his longing for home.
 The council of the Gods. (Note that it seems to introduce this section in a similar way to how the assembly in the Book 1 introduces the "Telemachy.")
 The lushness of the island, the beauty of Calypso.
 Hermes' appreciation of the lushness, his tact, his businesslike manner.
 Calypso reluctant acceptance of the ruling of Zeus.
 Her agreeing to help Odysseus with tools and other gifts.
 Odysseus' tact when he explains to Calypso why he so wants to go home.
 The sexual nature of their relationship.
 Odysseus' purposefulness in building the raft.
 The wrath of Poseidon.
 Ino's gift and Odysseus' mistrust of it.
 Athena's aid and Odysseus' survival skills.
 Odysseus' prayer to the unnamed river god.
 What Odysseus does to make sure he survives his first night back on land.
 EPITHETS: Who is . . .
 "lustrous goddess, queenly nymph?"
 "the guide and giant killer?"
 "long enduring?"
 "god of the earthquake?"
 QUESTIONS:
 How long does Odysseus stay on Calypso's island?
 What is the source of Calypso's power over Odysseus?
 What do we learn of Calypso's feelings for Odysseus?
 What will Calypso give Odysseus if he stays with her?
 Calypso asks Odysseus to compare her with Penelope; does Odysseus respond satisfactorily?
 How would you characterize the making of the raft, and the departure of Odysseus?
 For how many days does Odysseus swim?
 Why does Zeus, despite his liking of Odysseus, allow Poseidon to make this journey such an ordeal?
 Ino-Leucothea, in the guise of a seabird, gives him her veil. Why veil?
 Why does Odysseus return Ino's veil to the sea?
 After two days of swimming, note several phases of decision-making. Does Odysseus accomplish his rescue on his own?
 QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

A great (64)

fire

blazed on the hearth and the smell of cedar
 cleanly split and sweetwood burning bright
 wafted a cloud of fragrance down the
 island.
 Deep inside she sang, the goddess Calypso,
 lifting
 her breathtaking voice as she glided back
 and forth
 before her loom, her golden shuttle
 weaving.
 Thick, luxuriant woods grew round the
 cave,
 alders and black poplars, pungent cypress,
 too,
 and there birds roosted, folding their long
 wings,
 owls and hawks and the spread beaked
 ravens of the sea,
 black skimmers who make their living off
 the waves.
 And round the mouth of the cavern trailed a

vine
laden with clusters, bursting with ripe
grapes.
Four springs in a row, bubbling clear and
cold,
running side by side, took channels left and
right.
Soft meadows spreading round were starred
with violets,
lush with beds of parsley. Why even a
deathless god
who came upon this place would gaze in
wonder.

But lustrous Calypso shuddered at those (129)
words
and burst into a flight of indignation. "Hard
hearted
you are you gods! You unrivaled lord of
jealousy -
scandalized when goddesses sleep with
mortals. . ."

"But since there is no way for another god (153)
to thwart
the will of storming Zeus and make it come
to nothing,
let the man go -"

[Calypso] found him there on the headland, (167)
sitting still,
weeping, his eyes never dry, his sweet life
flowing away
with the tears he wept for his foiled journey
home,
since the nymph no longer pleased. In the
nights, true,
he'd sleep with her in the arching cave - he
had no choice -
unwilling lover beside a lover all too willing.
. .

"Ah, great goddess," (236)

worldly Odysseus answered, "don't be
angry with me.
All that you say is true, how well I know,
Look at my wise Penelope. She falls far
short of you,
your beauty, stature.

Even as he spoke, (228)

the sun set . . .
long in each others arms, they lost
themselves to love.

He set to cutting trunks - the work was done (268)
in no time.

But now Poseidon, god of the earthquake, (310)
saw him -
(

. . . he spied Odysseus sailing down the sea
and made his fury boil even more. . .
"Outrageous! Look how the gods have
changed their minds
about Odysseus!"

But half drowned as he was, he'd not forget (356)
his craft -
he lunged after her through the breakers,
laying hold
and huddling amidships fled the stroke of
death.

then and there (479)
unlucky Odysseus would have met his
death -
against the will of fate -
but the bright eyed one inspired him yet
again.
Fighting out from the breakers, pounding
toward the coast,
out of danger he swam on, scanning the
land. . .

"I throw myself on your mercy, on your (495)
current now.
I have suffered greatly. Pity me lord,
your suppliant cries for help."

Long -enduring great Odysseus, overjoyed (538)
at the sight
bedded down in the midst and heaped up
the leaves around him.
As a man will bury his glowing brand in
black ashes,
off on a lonely farmstead, no neighbors
near,
to keep a spark alive, so great Odysseus
buried
himself in leaves and Athena showered
sleep
upon his eyes. . . sleep in a swift wave
delivering him from all his pains and
labors,
blessed sleep that sealed his eyes at last.